

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-01 AID-05 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00

OMB-01 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 OES-09 DOE-15

SOE-02 ICA-11 /076 W

-----031521 020003Z /15

R 011037Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9805

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, EINV, PDEV, ENRG, NI

SUBJECT: LAND DECREE REMAINS IN ABEYANCE

REF: LAGOS 4663

1. SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER ITS ANNOUNCEMENT NIGERIA'S LAND DECREE APPEARS TO BE GOING NOWHERE IN A HURRY. LOCAL REGISTRATION BOARDS TO IMPLEMENT THE DECREE HAVE SO FAR BEEN SET UP ONLY IN OGUN AND LAGOS STATES. NO JUDGMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE. A MOOD OF CYNICISM PREVAILS THAT THE RICH WILL COME INTO OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND THROUGH BRIBERY AND INFLUENCE EVENTUALLY, SHUNTING THE POOR AND NEEDY ASIDE. A MORE PERVASIVE FEELING IS THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT MAY WELL REPEAL THE DECREE. IN VIEW OF THIS, OFFICIALS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY SEEM PRONE TO LEAVE THE DECREE AS IT IS NOW WITH THE RATIONALE THAT THERE WILL BE LESS TO REPUDIATE WHEN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION TAKES OVER. THOSE IN POWER WHO INSTITUTED THE ACTION, REPORTEDLY THE YAR'ADUA FACTION, CAN RIGHTLY POINT TO THEIR LIBERAL STANCE ON WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED ALREADY. THERE WOULD BE MUCH UPSET AND LITTLE SELF-SERVING GAIN FOR THEM IN PUSHING THE MATTER TO IMPLEMENTATION AT THIS TIME.

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2. ON THE TECHNICAL LEVEL, THE DECREE LACKS MANY DETAILS TO AFFECT IMPLEMENTATION. THERE IS NOTHING WRITTEN ON HOW PLOTS WILL BE ALLOCATED. IT IS ALSO UNCLEAR WHETHER OCCUPANCY WILL BE LIMITED TO ONE PLOT, WHETHER LANDLORDS WILL BE FORCED TO LIVE WITH TENANTS, ETC. IT IS INCREASINGLY APPARENT THAT UNTIL

RENTAL GUIDELINES ARE WORKED OUT, THE NATION'S HOUSING
SHORTAGE WILL CONTINUE TO BE ACUTE. A FURTHER PROBLEM
IS THAT BANKS ARE NO LONGER GIVING LOANS ON THE
STRENGTH OF LAND COLLATERAL. NO CERTIFICATES OF
OCCUPANCY ARE BEING ISSUED. WITHOUT CERTIFICATES AN
OWNER CANNOT DEVELOP THE LAND HE OWNS. IN SUM, THE
SCENE IS ONE OF STALEMATE AND WAITING.
WYMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAW, LAND NATIONALIZATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LAGOS09486
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780315-0356
Format: TEL
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197807102/aaaadhzy.tel
Line Count: 70
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 13774a6b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 LAGOS 4663
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1852410
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAND DECREE REMAINS IN ABEYANCE
TAGS: ECON, EINV, PDEV, ENRG, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/13774a6b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014